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Our Concern is the
Status of Women

"Society's most arbitrary folly is the underutilization of women's brainpower. We have made a few dents in that massive folly! In the past women have been idolized, patronized and exploited — it is time they are humanized, utilized and recognized."

Laura Sabia, Chairman
Ontario Status of
Women Council

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What is the Ontario Status of Women Council and why was it formed

The Ontario Status of Women Council is an advisory Council to the Provincial Government, formed in September 1973 as part of a 'follow-through' programme on a recommendation contained in the report "Equal Opportunity for Women in Ontario: A Plan for Action"; one of 18 recommendations.

Council's mandate

1. To advise the Ontario Government through the Provincial Secretariat for Social Development on matters pertaining to the status of women in Ontario.
2. To co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of recommendations contained in the report "Equal Opportunity for Women in Ontario: A Plan for Action" (June 1973).
3. To report annually to the Legislature, through the Provincial Secretary for Social Development, in regard to the Council's recommendations and progress. (Order-in-Council, OC-2399/73)

Who makes up the Council

The Council consists of a chairman and 18 members (17 women, 2 men), including the Ontario Government's executive co-ordinator for women's programmes, all appointed by the Government. Council members receive no salary but are paid expenses and a per diem for actual meetings. The Council, with a support staff of five, operates on a budget provided by the Ontario Government.

How does the Council operate

There is an executive and six committees that meet regularly and report to the full Council meetings, held the second Thursday in each month, except August. Meetings are held in the Macdonald Block, corner of Bay and Wellesley Streets, Toronto, except for the two or three occasions when the Council meets in other centres. Council meetings are always open to the press and to the public and observers are welcome.

Talent bank

A bank of women whose names are submitted, where appropriate, for consideration by the government, when vacancies are being filled on the numerous government boards and commissions. Send us your resume if you are interested. These are not full-time appointments but similar to the Council appointments.

Additional subjects for immediate consideration

Women and Sports, Health, Rural Communities. Use of educational T.V. for high school and university credit courses for women in the home.

The Council welcomes the improvement in the labour laws with respect to maternity leave and equal pay; the provision of birth control information and services at the local level; and the appointment of more women to government boards and commissions. Reform of family property law has been promised — a top priority of the Council for 1975.

Council is involved in many current and essential issues of concern to thinking and caring women and men from all areas of society and will continue to explore, analyze and work for change to bring about a just, democratic society for all Ontario citizens.

Women are absent from many policy and decision-making areas, and the under-utilization of the knowledge and skills of half of Ontario's population is no longer defensible.

"Equal opportunities, equal responsibilities and choices — these are our goals"

Laura Sabia

Excerpt from Council's first annual report

"We skirmished, we attacked, we studied, we acted. We were appalled at the antiquated property laws of Ontario. They needed massive overhauling. Our "Fair Share" Conference at the end of October gave the Attorney General of Ontario the concensus of women's thinking. We took on the banks, the universities and the advertising world, all bastions of past discriminatory practices. We were horrified at the few women in senior positions in education such as principals, directors of education, and senior officials. We criticized counselling services in the schools, that funnel our young girls into traditional stereotyped roles. We prepared a unique poster, along with a pamphlet on guidelines, for all teachers from kindergarten to grade 6, to make them aware of the damaging sex-stereotyping in text books and in teacher attitudes.

We involved over 1,000 women in Ontario in monitoring the destructive and corrosive advertising that portrays women as simpering idiots or as mere sex objects.

Our Brief on birth control was presented to the Task Force. Our provincial health units must be made aware of the immediate necessity to disseminate birth control information and services throughout the Province. It is absolutely essential that both men and women have all the necessary information available to them to control their fertility. It is imperative to the advancement of women!

Labour laws were scrutinized and studied, we made recommendations on night work, pregnancy leave and pensions.

We are well aware that we have but scratched the surface, much, much more needs to be done — part-time work, new approaches to family benefits, problems of single parent families, adequate day care, the needs of native women and on and on and on."

September, 1974

The committees are active in the following subject areas

Education

- Guidance Counselling
- O.E.C.A. (Ontario Educational Communications Authority — Channel 19)
- Post Secondary Education — Equal Opportunities in
 - (a) Universities
 - (b) Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology
 - (c) Librarians
- Principals Courses and Women Teachers
- School Boards — Survey re Opportunity for Women and Sex Role Stereotyping
- Sex Role Stereotyping in Textbooks — Publication of Poster and Pamphlet

Justice

- Conference on Family Property Law
- Critique of Bill 117
- Credit for Women
- Ontario Law Reform Commission Reports On
 - (a) Family Property Law
 - (b) Family Courts
 - (c) Children
- Use of Married or Single Name by Women

Labour

- Brief to Task Force on Benefits and Follow Up
- Canada Pension Plan
- Chartered Banks — Equal Opportunities
- Equal Pay
- Liquor Control Board of Ontario — Hiring Practices
- Maternity Leave
- Night Transportation

Monitoring

- Advertising Assessment — Stage One and Stage Two
- Individual Advertisements

Social services

- Birth Control
 - (a) Brief to Task Force on Family Planning
 - (b) Monitoring New Programme
- Day Care — Expansion
- Correctional Services — Female Offenders
- Homemakers and Domestic
- Women on Family Benefits Allowances

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*While Europe's eye is
fixed on mighty things
The fate of empires and the
falls of kings:
While quacks of state must
each produce his plan
And even children lisp the
rights of man;
Amid this mighty fuss just
let me mention
The rights of women merit
some attention.*

Robbie Burns, 1792



Ontario

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